

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR EFFICIENTLY IMPLEMENTING
AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE ARCHITECTURE**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 This application relates to, and claims priority in, U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/254,158, entitled "Bus Auxiliary Channel (BAC) Providing DMA Capabilities For Concurrent I/O Accesses" filed on December 7, 2000. The related application is commonly assigned, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND SECTION

1. **Field of the Invention**

15 This invention relates generally to techniques for designing electronic systems, and relates more particularly to a system and method for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture.

2. **Description of the Background Art**

20 Utilizing efficient methods to implement electronic systems is a significant consideration for designers and manufacturers of contemporary electronic devices. However, efficiently implementing electronic systems may create substantial challenges for system designers. For example, enhanced demands for increased device functionality and performance may require more system processing power and require additional hardware resources. An increase in processing or hardware requirements may also result in a corresponding detrimental economic impact due to increased production costs and operational inefficiencies.

30 Furthermore, enhanced device capability to perform various advanced operations may provide additional benefits to a system user, but may also place increased demands on the control and management of various device

components. For example, an enhanced electronic device that transfers digital image data may benefit from an effective implementation because of the large amount and complexity of the digital data involved.

In certain contemporary environments, complex or lengthy operations may often consume substantial amounts of available system resources to the detriment of other system functionalities. For example, a system central processing unit may be diverted from other important tasks if frequently required to coordinate and control one or more data transfer operations of significant complexity or length.

Due to growing demands on system resources and substantially increasing data magnitudes, it is apparent that developing new techniques for implementing electronic systems is a matter of concern for related electronic technologies. Therefore, for all the foregoing reasons, developing efficient techniques for implementing electronic systems remains a significant consideration for designers, manufacturers, and users of contemporary electronic devices.

SUMMARY

In accordance with the present invention, a system and method are disclosed for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture. In one embodiment, an electronic system may preferably include, but is not limited to, a central processing unit (CPU), a primary device, a memory, one or more primary peripheral devices, an auxiliary device, and one or more auxiliary devices. In accordance with the present invention, the primary device may preferably communicate with the auxiliary device via either a primary channel or an auxiliary channel.

During utilization of the primary channel, the CPU may initially determine whether the performance of an auxiliary configuration operation to configure or setup the auxiliary device is required. The CPU may preferably utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, the auxiliary device may provide notification, or alternately, the CPU may poll the auxiliary device. If such an auxiliary configuration operation is required in electronic system, then the CPU may preferably utilize an arbiter to arbitrate for access to the primary channel.

After gaining access to the primary channel, then the CPU may preferably program auxiliary configuration registers to effectively setup the auxiliary device. In accordance with the present invention, the CPU may perform an auxiliary configuration operation at powerup, or may dynamically perform an auxiliary configuration operation in response to various operating conditions in the electronic system.

In accordance with the present invention, the CPU may also preferably determine whether performance of an auxiliary communication procedure between the auxiliary device and the primary device is required. The CPU may utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, the auxiliary device or another entity may provide notification, or alternately, the CPU may poll the auxiliary device or other entities. When such an auxiliary communication procedure is required in the electronic

system, then the CPU may preferably utilize the arbiter to arbitrate for access to the primary channel.

After gaining access to the primary channel, then the CPU or any other appropriate entity may preferably perform the foregoing auxiliary

5 communication procedure between the auxiliary device and the primary device. In accordance with the present invention, such auxiliary communication procedures may readily include bi-directional communications.

10 In accordance with the present invention, during utilization of the foregoing auxiliary channel, the CPU may preferably monitor the electronic system until performance of a data transfer operation between the auxiliary device and the memory is required. The CPU may utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, the auxiliary device or another entity may provide notification, or alternately, the CPU may
15 poll the auxiliary device or other appropriate entities. When such a data transfer operation is required in the electronic system, then the CPU may preferably setup a DMA engine to control the foregoing data transfer operation. In certain embodiments, the CPU may preferably program various registers coupled to the DMA engine to provide relevant information regarding
20 the required data transfer operation.

Next, the CPU may preferably instruct the DMA engine to initiate the required data transfer operation. The DMA engine may then preferably begin the required data transfer operation between the auxiliary device and the memory via the auxiliary channel. When the DMA engine determines that
25 the current data transfer operation is complete, then the DMA engine may preferably notify the CPU regarding the completion of the required data transfer operation. In accordance with the present invention, the foregoing data transfer procedure via the auxiliary channel may readily occur concurrently with the foregoing communication procedure via the primary
30 channel. The present invention thus provides an improved system and method for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram that illustrates one embodiment of a unitary device;

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FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a first device and a second device coupled by a communications channel, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

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FIG. 3 is a block diagram for one embodiment of an electronic system, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram for one embodiment of the primary device of FIG. 3, in accordance with the present invention;

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FIG. 5 is a block diagram for one embodiment of the auxiliary device of FIG. 3, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram for one embodiment of the memory of FIG. 3, in accordance with the present invention;

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FIG. 7 is a flowchart of method steps for utilizing the primary channel of FIG. 3, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention; and

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FIG. 8 is a flowchart of method steps for utilizing the auxiliary channel of FIG. 3, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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The present invention relates to an improvement in architectures of electronic devices. The following description is presented to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to make and use the invention and is provided in the context of a patent application and its requirements. Various modifications to the disclosed embodiments will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles herein may be applied to other embodiments. Thus, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown, but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and features described herein.

The present invention comprises a system and method for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture, and preferably includes a primary device that is configured to perform core operating functions in the electronic architecture, an auxiliary device that is configured to perform selected additional operating functions in the electronic architecture, a primary channel configured for performing communications procedures between the primary device and the auxiliary device, and an auxiliary channel configured for performing data transfer operations between the primary device and the auxiliary device. In accordance with the present invention, the communications procedures over the primary channel and the data transfer operations over the auxiliary channel may preferably occur in a concurrent manner.

Referring now to FIG. 1, a block diagram that illustrates one embodiment of a unitary device 110 is shown. In the FIG. 1 embodiment, unitary device 110 may be implemented in any desired manner. For example, unitary device 110 may be implemented as an integrated circuit device for utilization in a more extensive electronic system.

Designers of electronic devices typically design electronic devices such as unitary device 110 to perform one or more specific tasks or operations.

After designing and manufacturing unitary device 110, the performance of various additional or different tasks may subsequently be required by system users. These new requirements may require an inefficient and economically detrimental redesigning and remanufacturing of unitary device 110.

5 In addition, electronic devices such as unitary device 110 typically include a plurality of external electrical connectors to allow unitary device 110 to communicate with various external entities. For example, integrated circuits typically have a series of electrical connectors that are commonly referred to as "pins" for communicating with other electronic devices. An
10 implementation with an insufficient number of available pins may have adverse effects upon various operating parameters of unitary device 110. For example, an insufficient number of available pins may negatively effect the operational bandwidth of unitary device 110. Appropriate solutions for the foregoing issues are further discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. 2
15 through 8.

Referring now to FIG. 2, a block diagram of a first device 110(a) and a second device 110(b) coupled by a communications channel 210 is shown, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In the FIG. 2
20 embodiment, first device 110(a) and second device 110(b) may be implemented in any desired manner. For example, first device 110(a) and second device 110(b) may be implemented as integrated circuit devices for utilization in a more extensive electronic system.

In the FIG. 2 embodiment, the problems discussed above in
25 conjunction with the FIG. 1 unitary device 110 may preferably be addressed by advantageously separating various functionalities of unitary device 110 (FIG. 1) for performance by either first device 110(a) or second device 110(b). In the FIG. 2 embodiment, first device 110(a) may then include relatively unchanging elements and functionalities, while second device 110(b) may be
30 utilized to support less standard, changeable elements and functionalities. System designers may thus efficiently redesign only second device 110(b) to subsequently support any additional or different tasks or operations. The

foregoing architecture may also be advantageously utilized while initially designing an electronic system. The FIG. 2 embodiment also provide a substantially increased pin count or number of available electrical connectors to thereby more efficiently implement a given electronic system.

5 In the FIG. 2 embodiment, first device 110(a) and second device 110(b) may communicate through a single communications channel 210. In certain environments and applications, the performance of a host electronic system may be adversely affected if a communication or a data transfer is immediately required between first device 110(a) and second device 110(b) 10 while communications channel 210 is currently in use. For example, a lengthy data transfer may stall other important communications. Appropriate solutions for the foregoing issues are further discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. 3 through 8.

15 Referring now to FIG. 3, a block diagram for one embodiment of an electronic system 310 is shown, in accordance with the present invention. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, electronic system 310 may preferably include, but is not limited to, a central processing unit (CPU) 314, a primary device 318, a memory 326, a primary peripheral A 334(a), a primary peripheral B 334(b), 20 an auxiliary device 342, and one or more auxiliary devices 354. In accordance with the present invention, primary device 318 may preferably communicate with auxiliary device 342 via either a primary channel 346 or an auxiliary channel 350.

In alternate embodiments, electronic system 310 may readily include 25 various other elements or functionalities in addition to, or instead of, those elements or functionalities discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 3 embodiment. Furthermore, electronic system 310 may be implemented and configured in any desired manner. For example, electronic system 310 may be implemented as various integrated circuit devices, as a audio/visual 30 electronic device, as a consumer electronics device, as a portable electronic device, or as a computer device.

In the FIG. 3 embodiment, CPU 314 may preferably be implemented as any appropriate and effective processor device or microprocessor to thereby control and coordinate the operation of electronic system 310 in response to various software program instructions. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, primary
5 device 318 may preferably communicate with CPU 314 via path 312, and may preferably include one or more interfaces for bidirectionally communicating with other devices or entities in electronic system 310.

As discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 2 and first device 110(a), primary device 318 may preferably be implemented to perform a core group of
10 designated and relatively unchanging functions for electronic system 310. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, primary device 318 may preferably perform various input/output interface functions for electronic system 310. One embodiment of primary device 318 is further discussed below in conjunction with FIG. 4.

In the FIG. 3 embodiment, auxiliary device 342 may preferably
15 communicate with primary device 318 via primary channel 346 and auxiliary channel 350. Auxiliary device 342 may preferably include one or more interfaces for bidirectionally communicating with other devices or entities in electronic system 310, and may essentially serve as an expansion device of primary device 318. As discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 2 and
20 second device 110(b), auxiliary device 342 may be flexibly implemented to perform a secondary group of designated and supplementary changeable functions for electronic system 310. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, auxiliary device 342 may preferably perform various input/output interface functions for electronic system 310. One embodiment of auxiliary device 342 is further
25 discussed below in conjunction with FIG. 5.

In the FIG. 3 embodiment, electronic system 310 may preferably utilize primary channel 346 to perform any desired types of communications between primary device 318 and auxiliary device 342. For example, in
30 certain embodiments, primary channel 346 may preferably be utilized to transfer basic operational communications and other information between CPU 314 and auxiliary device 342. In accordance with the present invention,

in certain embodiments, the operation of auxiliary device 342 and primary channel 346 may be substantially transparent to CPU 314.

In the FIG. 3 embodiment, electronic system 310 may preferably utilize auxiliary channel 350 to transfer any desired type of information between primary device 318 and auxiliary device 342. For example, in certain embodiments, auxiliary channel 350 may preferably be utilized to transfer various types of data and other information between auxiliary device 342 and memory 326 via primary device 318. In other embodiments, auxiliary channel 350 may preferably be utilized to transfer any desired type of information between auxiliary device 342 and any entity coupled to electronic system 310. In accordance with the present invention, in certain embodiments, the operation of auxiliary device 342 and auxiliary channel 350 may be transparent to CPU 314.

In the FIG. 3 embodiment, memory 326 may bidirectionally communicate with primary device 318 via path 330. Memory 326 may be implemented by utilizing any desired technologies or configurations. One implementation and configuration for memory 326 is further discussed below in conjunction with FIG. 6.

In accordance with the present invention, primary device 318 may also bidirectionally communicate with various primary peripheral devices 334 in electronic system 310. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, primary device 318 may preferably communicate with a primary peripheral A 334(a) via path 338(a), and may also preferably communicate with a primary peripheral B 334(b) via path 338(b). In alternate embodiments, primary device 318 may readily communicate with any desired number of primary peripheral devices in addition to, or instead of, those primary peripheral devices 334 that are presented and discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 3 embodiment. Similarly, in the FIG. 3 embodiment, auxiliary device 342 may preferably communicate with one or more auxiliary peripheral devices 354 via path 358.

Referring now to FIG. 4, a block diagram for one embodiment of the FIG. 3 primary device 318 is shown, in accordance with the present

invention. In the FIG. 4 embodiment, primary device 318 may preferably include, but is not limited to, a CPU interface 410, a peripheral interface A 412(a), a peripheral interface B 412(b), a DMA engine 454, an arbiter 450, a memory interface 420, a primary channel interface 416, and an auxiliary channel interface 418.

In alternate embodiments, primary device 318 may readily include various other elements or functionalities in addition to, or instead of, those elements or functionalities discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 4 embodiment. In addition, primary device 318 may be implemented in any appropriate manner. For example, in certain embodiments, primary device 318 may be implemented as a separate integrated circuit device in electronic system 310.

In the FIG. 4 embodiment, CPU 314 may communicate with primary device 318 through a CPU interface 410. Similarly, memory 326 may communicate with primary device 318 through a memory interface 420. In addition, primary peripheral A 334(a) may communicate with primary device 318 through a peripheral interface A 412(a), and primary peripheral B 334(b) may communicate with primary device 318 through a peripheral interface B 412(b). Primary device 318 may preferably also include a primary bus 426 to enable various components and devices in electronic system 110 to effectively communicate through primary device 318.

In the FIG. 4 embodiment, primary device 318 may preferably communicate with auxiliary device 342 across primary channel 346 via a primary channel interface 416. Similarly, primary device 318 may preferably communicate with auxiliary device 342 across auxiliary channel 350 via an auxiliary channel interface 418. In the FIG. 4 embodiment, in order to conserve the number of electrical connectors or pins used to communicate over primary channel 346, primary device 318 may preferably multiplex communications of multiple devices by utilizing the same pins. For example, CPU 314, primary peripheral A 334(a), and primary peripheral B 334(b) may each communicate with auxiliary device 342 through primary channel interface by using the same pins.

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In accordance with the present invention, arbiter 450 may therefore preferably perform a primary channel arbitration procedure for granting control of primary channel 346 to any appropriate entity coupled to primary device 318. Arbiter 450 may perform the primary channel arbitration
5 procedure using any effective technique or method. For example, a pre-determined priority scheme may be utilized, or a round-robin system may be used in which priority alternates on an equal basis among interested entities or devices.

In the FIG. 4 embodiment, DMA engine 454 may be utilized to perform
10 a direct memory access (DMA) data transfer between memory 326 and any appropriate entity coupled to primary device 318. For example, DMA engine 454 may coordinate a data transfer between auxiliary device 342 and memory 326 via auxiliary channel 350, auxiliary channel interface 418, and memory interface 420. The functionality and operation of primary device 318 is
15 further discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. 5 through 8.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a block diagram for one embodiment of the FIG. 3 auxiliary device 342 is shown, in accordance with the present invention. In the FIG. 5 embodiment, auxiliary device 342 may preferably
20 include, but is not limited to, a primary channel interface 516, an auxiliary channel interface 518, auxiliary configuration registers 520, and one or more auxiliary peripheral interfaces 524. Auxiliary device 342 may preferably also include an auxiliary bus 526 to enable various components and devices in electronic system 110 to effectively communicate through auxiliary device
25 342.

In alternate embodiments, auxiliary device 342 may readily include various other elements or functionalities in addition to, or instead of, those elements or functionalities discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 5
30 embodiment. In addition, auxiliary device 342 may be implemented in any appropriate manner. For example, in certain embodiments, auxiliary device 342 may preferably be implemented as a separate integrated circuit device in electronic system 310.

In the FIG. 5 embodiment, auxiliary device 342 may preferably communicate with primary device 318 across primary channel 346 via a primary channel interface 516. Similarly, auxiliary device 342 may preferably communicate with primary device 318 across auxiliary channel 350 via an auxiliary channel interface 518. In addition, auxiliary device 342 may communicate with one or more auxiliary peripheral devices 354 via auxiliary peripheral interfaces 524 and path 358.

In the FIG. 5 embodiment, auxiliary configuration registers 520 may be programmed by any appropriate entity, such as CPU 314, to perform an auxiliary device configuration procedure to thereby setup auxiliary device 342 for one or more particular functions. In certain embodiments, an auxiliary DMA engine (not shown) may be utilized to coordinate a direct memory access (DMA) data transfer between memory 326 and auxiliary device 342 via auxiliary channel 350. The functionality and operation of auxiliary device 342 is further discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. 7 and 8.

Referring now to FIG. 6, a block diagram for one embodiment of the FIG. 3 memory 326 is shown, in accordance with the present invention. In the FIG. 6 embodiment, memory 326 may preferably include, but is not limited to, application software 612, an operating system 614, and data 616. In alternate embodiments, memory 326 may readily include various other elements or functionalities in addition to, or instead of, those elements or functionalities discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 6 embodiment.

In the FIG. 6 embodiment, application software 612 may include program instructions that are preferably executed by CPU 314 (FIG. 3) to perform various functions and operations for electronic system 310. The particular nature and functionality of application software 612 preferably varies depending upon factors such as the specific type and particular use of the corresponding electronic system 310. In the FIG. 6 embodiment, operating system 614 preferably controls and coordinates low-level functionality of electronic system 310. In the FIG. 6 embodiment, data 616 may preferably include any desired type of information that is stored by

memory 326 for use by electronic system 310. In certain embodiments, memory 326 may be implemented as a synchronous dynamic random access memory (SDRAM) or other similar memory device.

5 Referring now to FIG. 7, a flowchart of method steps for utilizing the FIG. 3 primary channel 346 is shown, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The FIG. 7 embodiment is presented for purposes of illustration, and in alternate embodiments, the present invention may readily utilize various steps and sequences other than those discussed in
10 conjunction with the FIG. 7 embodiment.

In the FIG. 7 embodiment, in step 712, CPU 314 may preferably determine whether the performance of an auxiliary configuration operation to configure auxiliary device 342 is required. CPU 314 may utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, auxiliary device
15 342 may provide notification, or alternately, CPU 314 may poll auxiliary device 342. If such an auxiliary configuration operation is required in electronic system 310, then in step 716, CPU 314 may preferably utilize arbiter 450 to arbitrate for access to primary channel 346.

After gaining access to primary channel 346, in step 720, CPU 314 may
20 then preferably program auxiliary configuration registers 520 to effectively setup auxiliary device 342. In accordance with the present invention, CPU 314 may perform an auxiliary configuration operation at powerup, or may dynamically perform an auxiliary configuration operation in response to various operating conditions in electronic system 310. The FIG. 7 process
25 may then advance to step 724.

In foregoing step 712, if an auxiliary configuration operation is not required in electronic system 310, then in step 724, CPU 314 may preferably determine whether the performance of an auxiliary communication procedure between auxiliary device 342 and primary device 318 is required. CPU 314
30 may utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, auxiliary device 342 or another entity may provide notification, or alternately, CPU 314 may poll auxiliary device 342 or other entities. When

such an auxiliary communication procedure is required in electronic system 310, then in step 728, CPU 314 may preferably utilize arbiter 450 to arbitrate for access to primary channel 346.

After gaining access to primary channel 346, then in step 732, CPU 314 or any other appropriate entity may preferably perform the foregoing auxiliary communication procedure between auxiliary device 342 and primary device 318. In accordance with the present invention, such auxiliary communication procedures may readily include bi-directional communications. The FIG. 7 process may then preferably return to foregoing step 712 to perform any additional auxiliary configuration operations or auxiliary communication procedures. In accordance with the present invention, the FIG. 7 communication procedure via primary channel 346 may readily occur concurrently with the following FIG. 8 data transfer procedure via auxiliary channel 350. The present invention thus provides an improved system and method for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture.

Referring now to FIG. 8, a flowchart of method steps for utilizing the FIG. 3 auxiliary channel 350 is shown, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The FIG. 8 embodiment is presented for purposes of illustration, and in alternate embodiments, the present invention may readily utilize various steps and sequences other than those discussed in conjunction with the FIG. 8 embodiment.

In the FIG. 8 embodiment, in step 812, CPU 314 may preferably monitor electronic system 310 until performance of a data transfer operation between auxiliary device 342 and memory 326 is required. CPU 314 may utilize any effective technique to make the foregoing determination. For example, auxiliary device 342 or another entity may provide notification, or alternately, CPU 314 may poll auxiliary device 342 or other entities. When such a data transfer operation is required in electronic system 310, then in step 816, CPU 314 may preferably setup DMA engine 454 to perform the foregoing data transfer operation. In certain embodiments, CPU 314 may

preferably program various registers of DMA engine 454 to provide relevant information regarding the required data transfer operation.

Next, in step 820, CPU 314 may preferably instruct DMA engine 454 to initiate the required data transfer operation. In step 824, DMA engine 454 may then preferably begin the required data transfer operation from auxiliary device 342 to memory 326 via auxiliary channel 350. In step 828, DMA engine 454 may preferably determine whether the current data transfer operation is complete. If the current data transfer operation is not complete, then DMA engine 454 may preferably return to foregoing step 824, and continue to effectively perform the data transfer operation.

However, in step 828, if DMA engine 454 determines that the current data transfer operation is complete, then in step 832, DMA engine 454 may preferably notify CPU 314 regarding the completion of the required data transfer operation, and the FIG. 8 process may then terminate. In accordance with the present invention, the FIG. 8 data transfer procedure via auxiliary channel 350 may readily occur concurrently with the foregoing FIG. 7 communication procedure via primary channel 346. The present invention thus provides an improved system and method for efficiently implementing an electronic device architecture.

The invention has been explained above with reference to certain embodiments. Other embodiments will be apparent to those skilled in the art in light of this disclosure. For example, the present invention may readily be implemented using configurations and techniques other than those described in the embodiments above. Additionally, the present invention may effectively be used in conjunction with systems other than those described above. Therefore, these and other variations upon the discussed embodiments are intended to be covered by the present invention, which is limited only by the appended claims.